

Oxleas Wood and Shooter's Hill (Falconwood Circular)		
1 <sup>st</sup> walk check	2 <sup>nd</sup> walk check	3 <sup>rd</sup> walk check
Current status	Document last updated Friday, 21 <sup>st</sup> February 2020	
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## Oxleas Wood and Shooter's Hill (Falconwood Circular)

**Start & Finish:** Falconwood Station

**Length:** 6.3 km/3.9 mi with 124m ascent.

**Time:** 1 ½ hours

**Transport:** Falconwood Station is in Zone 4 and it is served by Main Line Services on the Bexleyheath Line from Charing Cross and Cannon Street to Dartford (and on to the Medway area). Journey time from London Bridge is from 22 minutes. It is also served by trains from Victoria via Denmark Hill (journey time is 34 minutes).

### Walk Notes:

This is an undulating route in the Royal Borough of Greenwich through several mostly ancient woodlands with a rich variety of plants and trees, up the southerly flank of Shooter's Hill, past a large south facing meadow with far views across South East London (and a café) and on through more woods past remnants of a stately home's gardens to the architecturally interesting folly of Severndroog Castle, with its tearoom. The descent back to the station passes another terraced garden and drops along Oxleas Meadows to cross over into Shepherdleas Woods for the return to Falconwood station.

### Walk Options:

**Buses** get you back to train stations from various points on or not far off the walk route, the bus stops are mentioned in the pdf directions.

### Refreshments en route:

**Oxleas Wood Café** Crown Woods Lane, Shooter's Hill, London SE18 3JA (020 8856 4276). Located 2.4 km/1.5 mi into the walk. Open 08.00-16.30 (kitchen open to 15.30).

**Severndroog Tearoom** Severndroog Castle, Castle Wood, Shooter's Hill, London SE18 3RT (020 3092 5117, <https://www.severndroogcastle.org.uk/tearoom.html>). Located 3.5 km/2.2 mi into the walk. Open 10.00-16.00 weekends (all year) and some weekdays, depending on season. Selling homemade cakes and light bites, with seating inside and out.

### Refreshments at the end of the walk:

**The Falcon** Lingfield Crescent, Eltham, London SE9 2RN (020 8850 3663). Open all day every day. Food served all day every day (to 21.00 Sun-Thu and to 22.00 Fri-Sat). A Harvester Pub.

## Notes

### Green Chain Walk

The South East London Green Chain, also known as the Green Chain Walk, originally was a linked system of open spaces between the Thames and Crystal Palace Park, created in 1977 by the four boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich and the GLC from 300 open spaces to protect them from building activity. The system begins at three places on the Thames: Thames Barrier, Thamesmead and Erith. There are various circular walks along the route, and there is an offshoot from the main route to Chislehurst. More recently it has been extended to include sections in Southwark, with arms leading to Dulwich and Nunhead Cemetery. Many parts of the system are also part of the Capital Ring route.

<https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/walking/green-chain-walk>

### Oxleas Wood

Oxleas Wood is an area of ancient deciduous forest in the Royal Borough of Greenwich (with a small amount passing over the boundary into Bexley). Some parts date back over 8,000 years to the end of the last Ice Age. It is part of a larger continuous area of woodland and parkland on the south side of Shooter's Hill: other parts are Jack Wood, Castle Wood, Oxleas Meadows, Falconwood Field, Eltham Common and Eltham Park North (including the ancient Shepherdleas Wood). Oxleas Wood, Jack Wood and Shepherdleas Wood are a Site of Special Scientific Interest called Oxleas Woodlands, covering 72 hectares.

In 1811 the woods were bought out of private hands by the War Department and only sold on to the London County Council in 1930, opening to the public in 1934. In 1993 plans for a River Crossing that would have cut through Oxleas Wood were withdrawn following opposition from local residents.

There is an underground water reservoir in the grassed area called Oxleas Meadows.

<http://oxleaswoodlands.uk/>

### Shooter's Hill

Shooter's Hill (or Shooters Hill) is a district within the Royal Borough of Greenwich, bordering the Borough of Bexley. With a height of 132m, it is the highest point in Greenwich and one of the highest points in London. Shooter's Hill also gives its name to the A road which passes through east to west, running straight up from Blackheath and down to North Kent, and is part of an ancient Brythonic trackway, later paved by the Romans and named Watling Street by the Saxons. The gradient in the west is so steep that during the 1950s it had to be lessened as low-powered motor vehicles of the era frequently struggled to get to the top. Although there are earlier references to a 'Shetereshelde', it reputedly takes its name from the practice of archery there during the Middle Ages, and the name is also commonly linked to its reputation as a haunt for highwaymen (it was infamous for its gibbets of executed felons, mentioned in Pepys' diary).

Oxleas Wood remains a public open space close to the top of the hill, and there is also a golf-course and one of the last remaining areas of farmland in inner London, Woodlands Farm (now an educational charity). Landmark buildings on the hill include the distinctive gothic revival water tower at the top (built in 1910) and the interesting folly of Severndroog Castle.

The area became a desirable out-of-town location to live and several large houses were built. Remnants of Jackwood House and Castlewood House survive today as brick work terraces and rose gardens.

### Severndroog Castle

Severndroog Castle is a folly situated in Oxleas Wood on Shooter's Hill, and was designed by Richard Jupp, with the first stone laid on 2 April 1784. It was built to commemorate Commodore Sir William James who, in April 1755, attacked and destroyed the island fortress of Suvarnadurg (rendered in English: *Severndroog*) of the Maratha Empire on the western coast of India, between Mumbai and Goa. James died in 1783 and the castle was built as a memorial to him by his widow, Lady James of Eltham.

Listed as Grade II\* in 1954, the Gothic-style castle is 19m high and triangular in section, with a hexagonal turret at each corner. From its elevated position, it offers views across London, with features in seven different counties visible on a clear day. The tower was used in the trigonometric Anglo-French Survey (1784–90) linking the Greenwich and Paris Observatories, when a 91cm theodolite (now in the Science Museum) was temporarily installed on its roof. The survey led to the formation of the Ordnance Survey.

After going through several hands, in 1922, the tower was purchased by London County Council and it became a local visitor attraction with a ground-floor tearoom serving drinks and cakes. In 1988, the local council could no longer afford the building's upkeep and it was boarded up. In 2002, a community group, the Severndroog Castle Building Preservation Trust, was established with the aim of restoring the building and opening it to the public. Work began in July 2013, and it was reopened to the public on 20 July 2014. Open on Sundays: 10.30-16.30 Apr-Oct, 10.00-15.30 else. <https://www.severndroogcastle.org.uk/>

## WALK DIRECTIONS

Walk up some steps at the westerly end of the platform to leave **Falconwood Station** through the station building onto the forecourt and *turn right* towards a busy road. In 30m cross **Rochester Way** carefully via the central reservation and *turn right* along the opposite pavement to cross the railway line on the road bridge. In 60m at the far side of the bridge by a bus stop and a three-way metal signpost, *bear left* (290°) to the left of a metal car barrier with the **Green Chain Walk** (GCW), signed 'Eltham Park North ½ m' (i.e. ignore the left turn parallel to the railway line), passing an info panel for 'Eltham Park North/Shepherdleas Woods' and a marker post and going across a plank bridge.

Follow the broad earthen path through **Shepherdleas Wood**, for a while accompanied by the road noise from the nearby A2. In 90m you pass a GCW marker post and in another 90m *turn right* with a GCW marker post at a three-way junction (340°). In 15m cross a drain and in 200m at a signposted GCW three-way junction, continue in the same direction ('Oxleas Wood 1¼ m, Thames Barrier 4½ m, Thamesmead Riverside 6¼ m'). In 80m *turn right* with a GCW & Capital Ring (CR) marker post, ignoring a narrow path ahead, and in 60m *turn right* with another marker post, parallel to **Rochester Way**, until in 75m you *curve left* with the path and cross the road at a set of lights.

Continue along **Welling Way** opposite and in 20m *turn left* with a GCW signpost along a forest track into **Oxleas Wood**. In 30m you have a picturesque pond on the right and in 190m by a two-way metal signpost and a footpath marker post and with **Oxleas Meadows** visible a little on the left ahead, *turn right* with the GCW along a broad forest track. In 130m at a four-way junction (three of which are arms of the GCW), you [!] *turn half right* along the one path that is not part of the GCW (95°), soon with a streamlet/ditch on the left. In 120m go over some planks across a muddy stretch and in 130m at a five-way junction, *turn left* across the streamlet on an earth bridge (due N) and immediately ignore a right fork (which follows the streamlet).

In 50m continue in the same direction, ignoring a broad track turning left and in 135m – 30m before a multi-path junction – [!] *turn left*, in 20m going over a fallen tree (may be temporary). In 100m *turn left* at a junction with a broad forest track (another arm of the GCW). In 30m *turn right* (320°) along a broad track, leaving the GCW. In 80m the track starts to gently ascend and in 50m you continue in the same direction at a crosspaths. The gradient increases and in 150m you reach a grassy clearing near the top of the rise, with a tarmac path running around its perimeter. Cross the path and walk up to the far end of the grassy area, where you *turn left* along a tarmac path.

The path continues as an earth path and in 100m the GCW and the CR join up from the left where the path veers to the right. In 90m you pass a footpath and GCW/CR marker post just before an outdoor gym on the right and the top of **Oxleas Meadows** comes into view on the left. A tarmac path joins up from the left along the edge of the meadows and you continue in the same direction to the left of the fenced **Oxleas Wood Café**. At the end of the fence around the café ignore a right turning tarmac path towards a car park (and Shooter's Hill (road) with a **bus stop for services to Blackheath or Woolwich Arsenal by The Bull Inn**). Continue in the same direction downhill with the signposted GCW and CR ('Woolwich Common 1¼ m').

In 60m *fork right* away from the meadows and enter **Jackwood** and in 60m *bear right* as you pass a footpath and GCW/CR marker post, where a faint path joins from the left below (the return route). You ascend through the wood and in 40m ignore a left fork to continue in the same direction with the GCW. In 50m *turn left* along a tarmac drive at a bend and in 60m pass some rose beds and then some brick walled areas, some of the remnants of the ornamental gardens of **Jackwood House**. Explore the area up on the

right to your heart's content, but for the route continue along the tarmac path and in 100m *turn right* up the second set of steps to the higher level (by some tall pine trees).

*Turn left* along a paved path and in 40m cross a tarmac path and continue along a paved path towards a wrought iron gate in a high wall and in another 25m enter some **walled gardens** through the gate (if open) and walk a loop through **this tranquil oasis**. You leave the gardens back through the same gate and in 25m *turn right* along the tarmac path you crossed earlier. In 70m join the main tarmac drive and continue in the same direction at a four-way junction (all tarmac apart from the right turn). In 70m continue in the same direction again, at a path junction.

In 160m *fork right* with the GCW (this stretch can be muddy) and in 40m continue in the same direction with the GCW at a crosspaths, with an overgrown concrete wall on the left and a green metal bar fence on the right. In 50m by **Rose Cottage** on the left, you **[!]** *fork left* off the tarmac drive to continue along a narrow tarmac path and in 50m at the top of some terraced gardens, *turn right* up some curving steps. At the top of the steps, with the sight of **Severndroog Castle** ahead, *bear left* with the path, in 40m *fork left* in front of the fenced castle and in 15m reach the entrance to the castle (ticketed entry, usually open on Sundays only) and the **Severndroog Tearoom** (free entry) with an info panel to the left of the entrance.

Continue in the same direction past the castle (i.e. in 30m ignore the right running path around the fence) and in 40m, at a T-junction with a tarmac drive (from Rose Cottage) and by an info panel on the right, you continue in the same direction along the tarmac drive. In 140m *turn left* past a car barrier and continue along a wide tarmac path through **Castle Wood**, with **Eltham Common** away on the right downslope. In 100m *bear left* with the path (in 50m – foliage permitting – with some views on the right towards The Shard and assorted other high buildings) and in 100m you get fine views (foliage permitting) up on the left to **Severndroog Castle**. In 70m ignore a right running tarmac path downhill and in 20m curve to the left with the track.

In 40m you emerge from the trees by the **terraced gardens**, but at a lower level than before the ascent towards Severndroog, and ignore a path up to the left. *Turn right* along a tarmac path and *curve to the left* with it and in 30m *turn right* down some steps. *Bear left* gently downhill (130°, i.e. do not *turn left* on the level) along the right of two paths and in 20m *turn right* with the path where another path joins from the left and in 30m *veer left* with the path where another path joins from the right. In 30m *fork left* on the level, ignoring a right fork downhill and in 30m enter **Jackwood** and gently ascend through it. In 40m in a clearing at a staggered four-way junction, you continue in the same direction gently downhill.

In 150m (with some houses visible away down to the right), *bear left* with the path and in 60m start to ascend again. In 20m in a clearing by a right turn, you continue in the same direction further uphill and in 80m at a four-way junction at the top of the rise, *turn right* downhill. In 50m cross a stream on a plank bridge and in 35m *curve left* with the main path, ignoring a right turn towards some houses. In another 100m *bear left* with the path (with a painted white arrow on a tree) and in 60m by a wooden bench (a sculpted tree trunk) and by a tarmac track at a bend (you walked along it earlier), **[!]** you *turn hard right* back on yourself (145°) downhill along an earthen path.

In 70m emerge from the trees and *bear right* along a tarmac path down the edge of **Oxleas Meadows**. In 40m you have some houses on the right behind garden fences and follow the path all the way downhill to **Rochester Way**. You leave Oxleas Meadows through some metal barriers by an info panel and by a **bus stop on the right** (services to Welling) and cross the busy road by a central reservation. On the other side there is another **bus stop on the right** (services to Kidbrooke) and you ignore a tarmac path

directly ahead leading to a housing estate (signed 'Dumbreck Road and Berryhill'). Instead **[!]** you *turn left* briefly along the road and in a few metres *turn right* along another path towards the wood and in 20m pass an info panel and enter **Eltham Park North**, walking gently uphill.

In 40m ignore a faint left turn and in 110m *turn left* with the main path. In 50m the path levels out and in another 60m at a staggered five-way junction (GCW and CR cross from the right), you *turn left* briefly and in 15m *turn right* along a narrow path. About 50m to the right through the trees you can see a large grassy clearing (part of **Eltham Park North**) and are back in earshot of the A2. In 135m ignore a right fork and also ignore any subsequent minor paths from the right. In 270m at a three-way junction of broad paths, you *veer right* with the GCW, re-tracing the start of the walk back to **Falconwood Station**. You'll find **The Falcon** pub just beyond the station a little to the right. London bound trains depart from the near platform.